

Opening Statement of Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing “Examining the Extension of Special Needs Plans”
July 25, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

The Subcommittee will come to order. The Chairman will recognize himself for an opening statement. Today the Committee moves forward with its work in regular order to examine extending and improving Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plans (SNPs). SNPs enjoy bipartisan support because of their successful record in providing comprehensive, coordinated care to about 2 million Medicare beneficiaries.

This Committee is especially interested in understanding how we can help improve SNPs for the dual eligibles – since the majority of SNP enrollees are dually-eligible beneficiaries who are enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid. Duals often have multiple chronic conditions, physical disabilities, and cognitive impairments such as dementia, developmental disabilities, and mental illness. Yet, too often, these very beneficiaries are forced to navigate two government programs with benefit structures, rules, and incentives that are often less than simple and intuitive.

Today, we embark on our process to try to not only extend SNPs, but improve the tools that states and plans have to help these beneficiaries. So in addition to hearing from our three expert witnesses before us, but we want to invite stakeholder’s feedback on a bipartisan discussion draft we released. Our goal is simple: we want detailed feedback from stakeholders on the policies and specific language in this bill. We all share the goal of helping improve health outcomes, enhance quality, and improve the patient experience for SNP enrollees who are some of the most vulnerable, high-need beneficiaries in Medicare. As a starting place, this discussion draft includes a number of provisions including:

- Reauthorizes Institutional SNPs permanently and extends D-SNPs and C-SNPs for five years;
- Streamlines Medicare and Medicaid benefits through one process so it is easier for duals to navigate their benefits;
- Improves access to supplemental benefits for patients with chronic illnesses through the inclusion of a bipartisan proposal supported by various members, including Mr. Lance;

- Enhances quality by directing HHS actions;
- Holds us accountable for results, by requiring a number of studies so Congress receives appropriate feedback on policy changes.

I hope members will thoughtfully engage in today's discussion, examine the policies carefully, and provide feedback to Committee staff as we move forward.

Thank you to each of our witnesses. We look forward to hearing from each of you.